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ABSTRACT

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey and a locally developed follow-up instrument were administered to students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The survey was completed by 264 students in the senior class of 1988 out of a sample size of 500 students; all of these students had completed the initial CIRP survey as 1984 entering freshmen. The CIRP survey was completed by 3,300 members of the freshman class of 1984, and 3,235 students in the freshman class of 1988. Seniors reported more liberal political interests than either of the two freshman groups. Seniors rated six life objectives 10 percentage points more important than either freshman group: influencing social values; raising a family; having administrative responsibility for the work of others; helping others who are in difficulty; participating in a community action program; and helping to promote racial understanding. Seniors also rated three objectives five percentage points higher: creating artistic work; becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment; and keeping up to date with political affairs. (JDD)

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THE 1984 FRESHMEN

AS SENIORS

The University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

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HE 023 872

The 1984 Freshman As Seniors
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

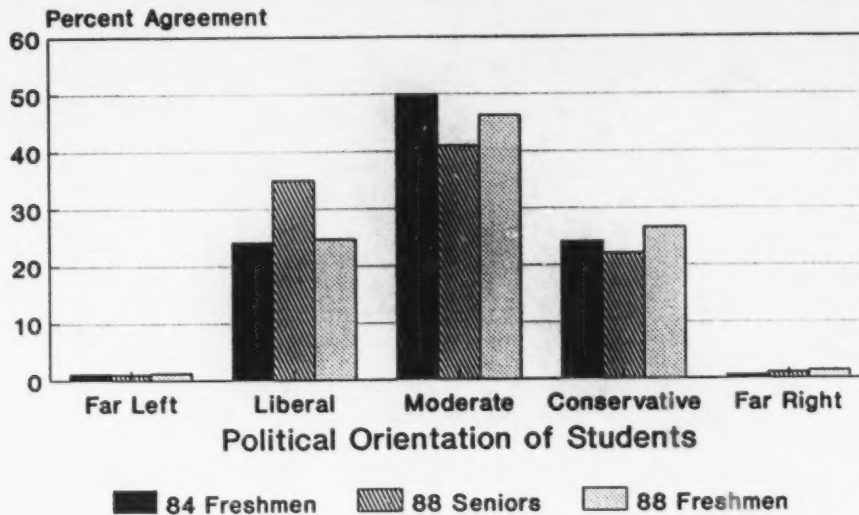
In the spring of 1988, the Office of Institutional Research concluded a four year longitudinal study of student development and change during college. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey from UCLA was used to study two freshmen classes, and a locally developed follow-up instrument based on the CIRP questionnaire was used for a class of seniors. The surveys contained demographic and issues-oriented questions and provided the opportunity to question students on the same material when they entered UNC as freshmen and when they graduated as seniors. The survey of graduating seniors was completed by 264 students in the senior class of 1988, out of a sample size of 500 students; all of these students had completed the initial CIRP survey as 1984 entering freshmen. The CIRP survey was completed by 3300 members of the freshman class of 1984, and 3235 students in the freshman class of 1988.

Results

Figure 1 displays the political orientation of the three different groups of UNC students. The data indicate that seniors report more liberal political interests than either of the two freshman groups confirming previous findings found by other researchers. The relative similarity between the freshman groups along with the senior results suggest that the college experience at UNC may have a liberalizing influence upon its students, and

Figure 1

1984 Freshman Follow-Up Survey



Office of Institutional Research

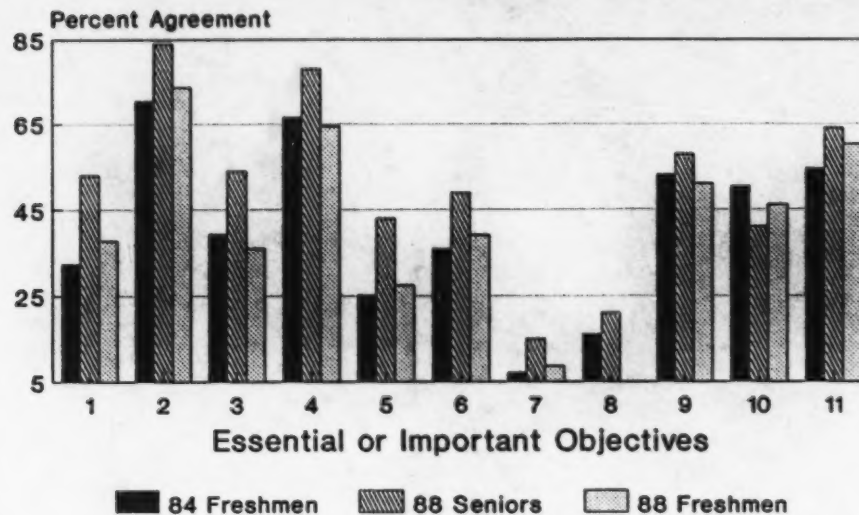
that this trend is not related to a broader social shift.

Figure 2 gives the student responses to eleven different life objectives. The seniors rated six of these goals ten percentage points greater than either freshman group, and three were rated five percentage points higher. The objectives in the ten percent group include influencing social values, raising a family, having administrative responsibility for the work of others, helping others who are in difficulty, participating in a community action program, and helping to promote racial understanding. The five percent goals were creating artistic work, becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment, and keeping up to date with political affairs.

Two of the eleven questions reflected differences between

Figure 2

1984 Freshman Follow-Up Survey



Office of Institutional Research

The items in figure 2 asked students to rate the subjective value of each of the following objectives. The students responded as to whether the goal was essential, very important, somewhat important, or not important.

- 1) Influencing social values.
- 2) Raising a family.
- 3) Having administrative responsibility for the work of others.
- 4) Helping others who are in difficulty.
- 5) Participating in a community action program.
- 6) Helping to promote racial understanding.
- 7) Creating artistic work (painting, sculpture, etc.)
- 8) Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment.
- 9) Keeping up to date on political affairs.
- 10) Being successful in a business of my own.
- 11) Developing a meaningful philosophy of life.

the freshman groups. The 1988 freshmen valued influencing the social structure more than the 1984 group, but the seniors still rated this goal higher than either freshman group. On the question related to developing a meaningful philosophy of life, the seniors and the 1988 freshman answered similarly, favoring this goal more than the 1984 freshmen, perhaps indicating the presence of a larger societal change.

Discussion

The developer of the CIRP survey, Alexander Astin, has identified these aspects of the university experience: 1) An enhanced self-image, 2) More liberal political and social views, and 3) An increase in hedonistic behavior and a decrease in religious interests. The first two effects are the most closely linked to being in college, while the third seems to contain both specific university and general maturational elements (Astin, 1977).

The results of this study support some of the Astin findings, particularly those related to seniors having more liberal political and social views. In comparison to the two freshman groups, the seniors reported a more liberal political orientation, and they valued socially oriented goals such as racial harmony, a clean environment, helping others, and being part of community action programs more than the freshmen. Seniors also had more family interests, more artistic interests, and placed a greater value on having a meaningful philosophy of life.

In contrast to the senior goals, the single distinctive

freshmen goal was to be successful in their own business. There are results to suggest, though, that the 1988 freshman are showing more interest in having a personal philosophy of life than did the 1984 freshmen; and, they do seem to be more interested in influencing social values.

The conclusions that may be drawn from these data are similar in many respects to those of previous research which reveal a theme of the development of liberal thinking during college. The changes seen in the senior group may be due to college or maturational effects, but it is also important to remember that the 1988 seniors experienced the implementation of UNC perspective requirements, greater focus on racial awareness on the UNC campus, and growing public knowledge of environmental concerns. All of these could have produced part of the observed shift and been a part of the change process.

For further information or to comment on this report, please contact Mr. Steve Flannelly in the Office of Institutional Research (962-3071).

Reference:

Astin, A. W. (1977). Four Critical Years. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers.

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